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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 1722
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 2246
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 2139
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 6540
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0191
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0345
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0062
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0746
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1027
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0260

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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR PROPOSES G-8 COOPERATION

CLASSIFIED BY AMB. JON R. PURNELL, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (SBU) As part of the 2006 Russian Chairmanship of the G-8, the Russian Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Farit Mukhametshin, invited other G-8 ambassadors to discuss how their countries might cooperate on assistance to Uzbekistan. The chief of the United Nations Office of Drug Control (UNODC) and the Swiss Ambassador also attended. (Note: Canada was the only G-8 country not represented, as it does not have a mission in Uzbekistan. The Swiss attended because Switzerland is a member of the Russia-chaired G-8 working group on counterterrorism. End note.) Ambassador Mukhametshin identified what the Russians saw as their three priority areas for G-8 cooperation: energy security, infectious disease control, and education. He also emphasized cooperation against terrorism and distributed English-language copies of documents already presented to G-8 Sherpas.

¶2. (C) All ambassadors welcomed the initiative, but some, including the U.S., expressed strong reservations regarding Uzbekistan's willingness to cooperate in these areas. The French Ambassador stated at length his embassy's difficulties engaging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in a bilateral dialogue. The U.S. Ambassador noted similar problems, adding that without an effective bilateral dialogue the U.S. ability to contribute to these efforts in Uzbekistan could be limited. He stated that the Embassy's recent attempts to engage the GOU on energy and education issues have been ignored; in fact, the GOU actions have made it very difficult for the Embassy to continue work in education at all. However, he noted, the GOU has responded positively to some initiatives on infectious disease control and, therefore, there might be some potential for constructive dialogue in that area.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: At this point, we are prepared to give the Russian Ambassador the benefit of the doubt in his efforts to listen to the opinions of G-8 member countries. While we are ready and willing to participate and support G-8 goals, as far as we can, absent a concrete bilateral dialogue with the GOU, we see only limited room for Embassy participation.

PURNELL